

THE  
DECISION & CLEARING  
OF  
The great Point now in Controversie  
About the  
INTEREST of CHRIST,  
And the  
Civill Magistrate,  
In the Rule of Government in this  
WORLD.

Stated according to the word of TRUTH;

AND

Presented to the

PARLIAMENT

Of this

COMMON-WEALTH;

AND

To all other Powers in the World  
where it may come; Or, to any that desire  
satisfaction in this Matter.

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Written by T. Collier.

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Mat. 22. 21. Render unto Caesar, the things that are Caesar's:  
and to God, the things that are God's.

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## To the Supream Authority, the Parliament of the Common-wealth of Eng- land, and the Dominions thereof.

**H**ave in this small Treatise been (at least) endeav-  
ouring to prepare and present unto you a subject of  
highest Concernment at this day, (i.e.) rightly to  
sever and distinguish between the interest of Christ  
and the Magistrates, or Powers of this world, in  
matters relating to Government, it having been the unhappy  
part of most of the Powers of this world to intermix and mingle  
their Power with that which the Lord hath reserved to himself,  
(i.e.) Rule and Dominion in Divine Things, in and over the con-  
sciences of men, which is (alone) the Lords Prerogative in these  
little Kingdoms he hath reserved to himself: I had prepared it be-  
fore, but now present it unto you, whom (after so long emptying from  
vessel to vessel) I may suppose are made willing to be acquainted  
with the Lords mind, and your duty or work in this matter, which  
is to let the oppressed go free.

I have no ground to question but that many (if not most) among  
you in this day of light, are principled in this truth already; yet  
(I suppose) this poor labour of him that truly loves Truth and  
Peace, with the true Gospel-liberty, may be both accepted and of  
use, if not to inform, yet to confirm in a truth of such importance.  
I have in this Treatise endeavoured truly to state the Magistrates  
Part, (as to Government) and the Lords, and cleared this, That  
Rule in Divine things belongs only to the Lord, and in civil things  
unto the Magistrate; I have given the grounds, with the dangers

of the Magistrates intermeddling with that which is none of his. I am not ignorant of the often urging of that word of Christ, Luke 14. 23. Compel them to come in; although it is as often abused from the real intencion of our Lord therein, which is a Ministerial compulsion by the Gospel-invitation, to us poor perishing Gentiles; the high act of Gods grace that such a compulsion is come forth to us.

I have endeavoured plainness (as becomes the Ministry of the New-Testament) and brevity, that so a little time might give you th. reading thereof. Oh that the God of Grace (who hath begun his wonders amongst us) would be pleased to engage the Powers of this Common-wealth wholly to disavow the claim of any interest in Dominion, (that so clearly and undoubted'y is our Lords Prerogative) that you might become a Pattern to the Nations round you, and by your practice preach this to all the world, That Rule in Divine things belongs to the Lord; doubtless if it convince them not, it shall be a witness against them; for on this account shall the Nations be broken, and their breach will be grievous and incurable. You being once more come to sit at stert in this Common-wealth; Who knows but that God hath been proving and refining you, that so you by whom he began the work in these Nations, might be honoured by him above all others in the further perfecting of it? Oh be not high-minded, but fear, humble your selves, so walk with God; know who it is that hath entrusted you, and fear before him; be wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves, so may you expect a blessing from Heaven, & your endeavours crowned both here and hereafter: So prayeth he who for Zions sake cannot hold his peace:

T. C.





# The decision of the great Point in Controversie, (*i. e.*) The Interest of Christ and the Magistrates in the Rule and Govern- ment in this World.

*Presented to the Supream Authority, the Parliament of the Com-  
mon-wealth of England.*



That Jesus Christ is Lord of all, *Acts* 10. 36. *Rom.*  
10. 12. is without all question; I suppose) to  
all who own the Scriptures of truth: That he  
is exalted and made *Head over all, to the*  
*Church, Eph.* 1. 20, 21, 22. and that he hath the  
Government of the World in his hand, *Matth.* 28. 18. al-  
though this be not so visibly made manifest as in the fulness  
of time it shall be, *Heb.* 2. 8. *we do not yet see all things under*  
*him;* by faith we believe it as it's made manifest in his Word.  
And it is as unquestionable, That the Powers and Magi-  
strates of this World have from, and under him a right of  
Rule and Government committed to them, in which they  
ought to be faithful: And in as much as it is a great Point  
now in controversie, What Power it is that the Lord hath ex-  
tended to Magistrates, & what are the limitations & bounds  
thereof; And, What it is he hath reserved to himself; Or,  
Whether he hath reserved any thing in point of Go-  
vernment to himself or no, or committed all to the Magi-  
strate, both Ecclesiastical as well as Civil: My Work will be

(2)  
in these ensuing lines to be discoursing and discovering the truth in this matter; and I cannot reasonably suppose (it being a matter of such great concernment) that it should be taken any otherwise then acceptably, it being no more (as I am in conscience convinced) then the discharge of my duty to the Lord, and the Magistrates under whom I live.

And as to the Point in hand, I say, 1. That Jesus Christ (to whom all Power in Heaven and Earth is given) hath committed an Authoritative Power and Rule to Magistrates in this World, till his coming again from Heaven; the truth of this is evidenced by the Word of Truth, *Prov. 8. 15, 16. By me Kings reign, and Princes decree Justice; By me Princes rule, and Nobles, even all the Judges of the earth, Rom. 13. 1. There is no Power but of God, the Powers that be are ordained of God; So that the Magisterial Power is ordained of God, and by him it is they rule, (i.e.) By his Ordinance and Appointment.*

Yet 2ly. Christ hath reserved a Room and Place of Rule for himself in and over the World; hence he is said to be *Lord of all*, Lord of quick and dead; Head over all to the Church, and over all *Principallity and Power, and every Name that is named, not only in this world, but likewise in that which is to come*; so that the great query now will be, What Power it is the Lord hath given to the Magistrate, and what it is he hath reserved to himself; the deciding whereof will be of great and singular concernment at this day.

1. What he hath given to the Magistrate, and that is Authority and Power to rule over men, (i.e.) To rule over the Bodies and Estates of men for good, and no other.

And 2. That which he hath reserved to himself lieth especially in these four things:

1. The Power of a secret and invisible ordering and disposing of all Governments, to carry on, and bring about his own design for his own glory and his Churches good; Hence he is said to be *Head over all things to the Church.*

2. He hath reserved the Power of pulling down, and setting

setting up of whom he will, *Dan. 4. 17.* Hence it is that he maketh changes in the Worldly Governments, to the end they might know that the Lord doth rule, and that they do rule by him, and should rule for him.

3. He hath reserved to himself the Power of calling all Magistrates to account at the great day of Account, in which they must be judged according to their discharge of that Authority and Trust committed to them, and reposed in them: These (I suppose) every one that hath any awe or fear of God will acknowledge.

But 4ly. Christ hath reserved all spiritual causes relating to matters of Faith and Worship to himself, and hath entrusted no Civil Magistrate or Power in Earth with this; the proving of which will prove the first Assertion, (*i.e.*) That the Trust committed to Magistrates is over the Bodies and Estates of men, and no otherwise; Therefore to prove it, I shall present several convincing grounds.

1. There is no New-Testament Scripture presents us with the Lords giving up of Authority to Worldly Magistrates in matters Ecclesiastical, (*i.e.*) Things in, and relating to matters of Worship, that clearly relate to conscience; if so, Hence I reason, That Authority which Christ hath no where given to Magistrates, he hath reserved to himself; but this of ruling of, and over the conscience, is nowhere committed by Christ to man, (*i.e.*) to Civil Magistrates, therefore he hath reserved it to himself.

2. *May we not suppose that the Scripture intends Spiritual and Ecclesiastical Concernments, as well as Civil, when it saith, we should be subject to every Ordinance of man for the Lords sake, &c.*

3. It is without question to be understood in civil things, there being no Magistrates then but such as were either Jews or Heathens; if subiection in Divine things had been intended, the Apostle in that saying (and in all others that calls for subiection to Magistrates) must necessarily have taught them either to be Jews or Heathens in point of Worship; for the Command of the Jewish Magistrates would be

be to the Old Testament-Ceremonies; and of the Gentiles, to their Idoll Temples, if to any thing in Worship; so that it's questionless, That it was in civil things that subjection is required.

2. Ground; In that Christs *Kingdom is not of this world*, (*i.e.*) of the Worldly Government that he hath committed to men; then certainly it must be some where, (*i.e.*) in the consciences of his People, there is Christs reign; and doubtless to deny this, (*i.e.*) The Rule of Christ by his Word and Spirit in the hearts of his people, and over them in matters of Worship, is a tenet very near of kin to Atheism.

3. In that he hath left in Scripture clear and absolute Rules for his people to walk by in point of Faith & Worship, unto which it is their duty to take heed until his second coming, *Matth.* 28. 18 19. *John* 14. 15. & *chap.* 15. 14. From whence I reason thus:

That if Christ hath left Commands and Rules to his People as to matters of Faith and Practice, then he hath reserved Authority from the Magistrate in this matter. But that he hath left Commands and Rules to his people in this matter, is clear, in which it is their duty to obey him; therefore he hath not committed this Authority to the Magistrate, for the Magistrate may (and that probably too) contradict Christs Commands; therefore Christ hath prevented that extremity, in reserving to himself Authority and Rule in Divine things: Hence it is that when Christs Law, and the Magistrates Will hath come in Competition; the Answer is stated for us, *Acts* 5. 39. *Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more then God, judge ye.*

4. This truth appears, in that Jesus Christ will judge his people in the day of Account, according to his Word; that being the Rule by which they are to walk, and by which it is they must be judged, *John* 12. 48. *And in the keeping thereof there shall be given reward*, *Psal.* 19. 11. *Rev.* 22. 14. Therefore he hath not committed this Authority to Magistrates, lest they should turn them aside from the righteous Rule.

Now is it not manifest, that the Magistrate is not to be

And

And indeed it seems to me to be ridiculous and unreasonable for any one to suppose that the Lord hath given up his people to the Wills of men in matters of Worship, and yet will judge them for not walking according to his Will in his Words; this were (indeed) to make him a hard Master, and to lay impossibility upon his people.

5. As we do not find that Christ hath any where resigned his Authority to the Magistrate, so neither do we find at any time, or in any case, the Lord to direct his people to the Magistrate for counsel or advice in determining Divine things, but the contrary, (*i.e.*) to the Scripture, *1st* 8.20. *Joh.* 5.39.27 *im.* 3.15. & to his Ministers with the church, *1st* 15.

6. If Authority in Divine things were committed to the Magistrate, it must be necessary to know to what Magistrate it is committed, whether to all Magistrates in all Nations alike; if so, then these two impieties will follow; 1. That the Lord hath subjected his word and will to the Judgements of Heathen and profane Magistrates. Or, 2ly, his people to their wills in point of VVorship. Or 2ly, If it be to some Magistrates, and not to all, (*i.e.*) to Christian Magistrates, then the doubt will be, to whom of them it is, there being many supposing themselves to be Christian Magistrates, and all think themselves to be in the truth, and most of them think themselves concerned to make provision for VVorship, and to exercise their Power in these things; and (indeed) the Lord having committed no such thing to any Magistrate, there is as much ground for one to claim it, as the other. The Papist supposes all truth to be there, and persecutes the Protestant under the notion of Hereticks. The Protestant supposes the Papist to be out, and himself to be in the right, and persecutes the Papist: and thus this very principle throws the World into confusion, every one that can get into Power is ready to make, or (at least) to think himself an absolute god in and over all causes, as well Ecclesiastical as Civil; and (doubtless) it concerns that Magistrate that is most enlightened in Divine Truth, to be first in rejecting and renouncing this authority

ty in Divine things; for (doubtless) the most enlightened and reformed Protestant-Magistrate, walking by this Rule, (i.e.) Authority in Divine things, &c. doth justify all others in their practices, there being as much rule for the one as the other; and so it is the ready way for Magistrates to be contracting the sin and guilt of all the civil Magistrates, and of all the blood that hath been shed on this account.

7. If Authority in divine things were committed to the Magistrates, this would without all controversie put an end to the sufferings of the Saints, for if this power were given to men, then it would be the Saints duty to submit unto them; then whence, and to what purpose are all those sayings of Christ in Scripture to strengthen his people against; and to comfort them in persecution, *Matt. 5. Luk. 6. Job. 16.* If it were true indeed that Magistrates had received this power from above, then they do well in exercising of it suitable to their understanding, and in punishing those that will not submit; and the Lords people do ill, and are justly persecuted for not performing their duty, how then shall they be blessed in their suffering? So then that Principle and Practice that justifieth Magistrates in a way of persecution, and condemneth Saints under the notion of Hereticks for their suffering for Christ, cannot be of God, &c. So that from these grounds I undoubtedly conclude, That Jesus Christ hath reserved to himself the power of governing and ruling in, and over his people in all Divine and Religious concerns and hath not resigned it to any Magisterial power on earth.

3. And finally, we find it clearly stated in the Scripture, that Christ hath committed his Authority in matters relating to VVorship, to his Church, and not to the Magistrate; Hence Christ having stated his own power, *Matt. 28. 18.* He promiseth his presence with his Church to the end of the world, *ver. 20.* therefore in case of offence he directs his to tell it to the Church, *Matt. 18. 17.* there being no higher appeal on Earth for Believers in divine things; and as the Church, so is its Government distinct from the world, and the



the worldly Government; so that that Magistrate that assumes this Authority to himself, robs the Church of that authority her Lord hath given her, and the authority Christ hath left in his church is spiritually to be exercised; all church-censures reacheth in the utmost extent to reject and cast out to the world and to Satan, from whence they came, not to inflict bodily punishments, but to endeavour in all the saving of the soul, that the flesh might be destroyed, and the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. And in as much as the Lord knows that his church might err in matter of judgement and censure about divine things, therefore he hath communicated a power of judgement to the church to be exercised according to their light & faith in divine Record, yet hath reserved to himself the power of judging, and that even of all the churches judgements and actions, to be made manifest in the day of Christ.

Obj. God having once committed the power of judging and executing of his Divine will in point of worship to the Magistracy of the Jews, (in the Old-Testament-Ministration) why may we not conclude, it remains a duty under the gospel, in as much as we find no repeal of that Authority?

Ans: God owning them as they were the natural seed of Abraham, to be a National church, he made that Church & State one, which is not, nor cannot be so in the Gospel, because he now owns the spiritual seed in the Gospel Church, and Covenant: And further, as he made that Church and State one, so he gave the Judicial and Political Law clear to them, and clearly stated the Magistrates duty on that behalf, but no such thing under the Gospel.

2. The authority of the Magistrate under that Ministration, was typical, and presented Christ the great Lord and Law-giver in the Gospel-ministration; for the annointed Office of Priest and King, lead to Christ the annointed one; so that when Christ was come, and had suffered and conquered in, and by his suffering, he put an end to that Ministration, and repealed Priesthood-government, and that whole ministration; so that whoever pleads Magi-



strates authority in Ecclesiastical causes from the Jewish constitution, doth (consequently) deny Christ to be come in the flesh, and takes his Government from him; so that we rightly understanding the Government of the Old Testament-Magistrates, should rightly be informed to whom the Right of Rule in Divine things, and Ecclesiastical concerns do now belong, namely, to Christ, into whom the magisterial power of the Old Testament is naturally and properly dissolv'd as the type into the substance.

q. Is it not the Magistrates duty to see to, and take care of the performance of the first table, and to see that the will of Christ (contained therein) be done by the people?

A. Doubtless it is not any part of his charge or work, and that from the Reasons already minded; and further, I might truly say, That as man is a reasonable creature, so Gods way of working to Divine undertakings, is by the illuminating of his understanding through his Word and Spirit, that so he might be able to give a reason of his hope, and serve in Divine things in the liberty of the Gospel, not having his understanding captivated to the will of another.

q. *Whence should arise this great mistake, as doubtless if it be a mistake, it is a great and dangerous one?*

A. Ignorance and Pride ushered in this mistake, and that is it which still endeavours to keep it on foot.

1. Ignorance: this ordinarily is the mother of all sin; and lyeth at the bottom of all mischiefs; Christ was put to death through Ignorance, 1 Cor. 2. 8. and it is through Ignorance men put him to death in his Authority, and put to death those that own him in his Authority, John 16. 2, 3. *It is (saith Christ) because they have not known the Father, nor me.*

2. Pride flowing from Ignorance, and a desire of self-exaltation: Pride of Magistrates, and pride of Ministers, accompanied sometimes with mistaken zeal, and sometimes with enmity, and desire of revenge, on those who submit not to their wills; witness the truth of this, That Person or people whoever, that concludes it the Magistrates duty to compel to Religion.

Religion think withall its meet they should be uppermost to be prescribing Laws for others. This proclaims it to be a proud, selfish principle, men while under will not like it, but when over will exercise it, this is pride, and a desire of domination; for all sorts of people in the world, dislikes with, and complains of a coercive power in matters Spiritual and Divine; unless it be when themselves have the ruling power, and are gotten uppermost; Protestants complain of Papists, and Papists of Protestants where they are under, and Non-Conformists of both; but him that is uppermost will rule.

q. *But what is the evil and danger incurred, by taking this authority of ordering and settling things relating to the worship of God, with a coercive Power.*

Ans. 1. It is an intruding into that which they have no right unto, and doubtless it is as open a wrong to Jesus Christ, as it is for one Prince to invade anothers Territories, and take away his dominion from him, under pretence of love to him, a sad sign and symptome of an aspiring minde, when men will not be content with what God hath allotted them, and not only to be undermining one another to make themselves greater, but they dare adventure on the crown and dignity of Jesus Christ.

2. Magistrates by this Practice do not only intrude themselves into his authority, where they have no right; but likewise must necessarily expose themselves to the great danger of contracting the guilt of the blood of souls upon themselves, And that (first) because compulsion by a coercive power necessarily makes a world of Hypocrites and Formalists; and so deceives them with the name and supposition of Christians and beleivers, when they are strangers to it; whereas otherwise through the spreading forth of truth in the Gospel-light; they might in an ordinary way be brought truly to look after God. Or secondly, in case the Magistrate err himself, in the Religion set up by him (as its wonder if he do not) and so compel to his own will in stead of the will of Christ, he may be instrumental to destroy souls in deterring them from closing with the truth, and compelling them to close vvith his error.

3. By

3. By this the Magistrate proclaims himself (in effect) to be infallible, in judging and determining universally, in matters of Religion, which is proper only to Jesus Christ, and so exalts himself above all that is called God, even above Jesus Christ, in that which is his Prerogative alone, and so at least attains to the badge and livery of Antichrist. This is judged so to be, by all reformed Churches, and therefore they apply it to the Pope or Papal power on this account (*i. e.*) his usurping a power & rule over the Consciences of the people, and persecuting all that differ from them, and how those who walk in the same steps (only their opinion changed in matter of Religion) will acquit themselves from the same guilt, I leave to themselves to judge.

4. It is that which derogates from the liberty of the Gospel which Christ hath purchased by his own blood for his people that they might not be the *servants of men* in divine things. May we rationally suppose that Christ hath delivered his people from the old Testament-Bondage; (that was ordained of God himself) to deliver them up to the power and wills of men, and it may be too, of such men as know not God; its true, God hath rather chosen to subject his children to the wills of men in suffering, then in serving in divine things; if Christ had left his people in this matter to the wills of men, the Gospel liberty had been much worse then that of the Law; David when he was to chuse, would rather fall into the hands of God, then into the hands of men, because he is merciful; and so tender was Paul of derogating from the Gospel-liberty, that notwithstanding he was infallibly inspired, yet usurps not this power to himself, of having Dominion over the faith of his Brethren, 2 Cor. 1. 24.

5. The Magistrate by this means necessarily exposeth himself to the danger of persecuting Christ; For (First) we may yea, we must suppose a possibility for Magistrates to erre, especially in divine things, being liable to tentations and snares above other men; and if they miss in the least hint or part of truth, and so compel from any part of truth to their own error, and persecute those that cannot in conscience submit, doubt.

doubtless they become persecutors of Christ. And (Secondly) we may have grounds for all that I know, to judge and hope, that the Lord may have a people that are precious to him, in and under all apprehensions in Christian profession, (who hold the head) and truly then it concerns the Magistrate to look to it, and to succour and defend all in all sorts of profession, rather then to persecute any one of Christs little ones, the danger of this see *Mat. 18. 6.*

6 Acts of Rapes and force on the body, in order to bodily fornication, are judged by the law to be acts of highest offence, even felony deserving death; but know that acts of force upon the soul, to spiritual fornication (which is done on all that are forced by a Magisterial Coercive power to that in worship, which is contrary to conscience) is a worse and more dangerous force or Rape, then that on the body to outward bodily fornication. For (first) the soul is the more sublime and divine part of man. And (secondly) a bodily rape may be (as its generally judged) without sin in the party that is violently surprized; but this of the spiritual force, who ever is conquered by it sins against God, though the thing may be lawful to which he may be compelled, yet to him its sin, being done against faith and conscience, for whatsoever is not of faith is sin, so that to set up a coercive power in Religious matters, is the likeliest and surest way in the world, to lay a necessity of sinning, or suffering, upon all conscientious people.

7. This act in the Protestant Magistrates, far exceeds that in the papal, and so it becomes a force of the highest nature; for the Papist faith to all, That they must believe as the Church believes, i. e. the Pope and his Clergy, and to accomplish this, he keeps them ignorant; permits not the Scripture in their own language, to the end they may believe as the Church believes; the common people shall know but what the Church will tell them, and so are kept ignorant, and their force is without trouble, for they think they do well, &c. But the Protestant seems to go further. The Scripture shall be translated into the mother tongue, that every one may read it; the people

people shall be pressed to buy Bibles, to search the Scriptures, to finde out the minde of God, &c. and when all is done, they must still believe as the Church believes, i. e. as the Minister, and Magistrate shall conclude. It is to invite to search, and see with their own eyes, and yet compell to believe what another sees, doubtless its not onely an irreligious, but an irrational thing to allow people to search and know, yet will put out their eyes and compel them to see with others.

I quere whether it would not be a lesser evil (Pope-like) to keep the Bible in an unknown tongue, and so keep the people ignorant, then to allow the Bibles, and compell to walk contrary to the light and truth apprehended therein; I mean to the powers thus acting, *Be wise now therefore, O y kings, be instructed ye Judges of the earth, kiss the Son lest he be angry, &c.*

8. The Magistrate by this, necessarily exposeth himself to the greater business in point of Government, and that unnecessary and needless business too; Such for which he will have no thank in the day of the Lord, notwithstanding he may undertake it through mistaken zeal (being perswaded thereto, that its his duty to take care for the observation of the first table, yet it belongs not to him, being no part of that which is committed to his care, by reason of which he doth not onely imploy himself about what he hath nought to do; but probably through his zeal in this, neglects the work he is intrusted with: See *Psalm*. 82 3, 4. Doubtless if Magistrates were rightly learned in this truth, it would ease them of much burden and care in and about what they suppose themselves concerned in, and set their hearts more to the work they are rightly called unto.

9. By this means Magistrates and others lay a foundation of persecution to themselves and their posterity; for if it be lawful for them to use a coercive power in Religious things towards others, then by the same rule of reason its lawful for another power (if it should arise) whose apprehension may be differing from theirs, to compell them and theirs contrary to their consciences to that Religion be it what it will, so they suppose it to be truth: And so,

10. It destroys that golden rule of righteousness to be observed of all, as ye would that men should do to you, so do ye to them, &c.

11. And finally, The Magistrates by this means, must necessarily expose themselves to the greater judgement in the day of accounts when they shall have not onely to account for the bodys and estates of men, but for the souls of men and for the wrong done to Christ and to his tender Lambs. Oh how doth it concern Magistrates as well as others, to take heed of heaping, and *treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath and pe:dition of angry men*. But to remember the words of Christ, *Mat. 23, 33.*

*Ob. 2d.* Probably it may be objected ( notwithstanding all that hath been said ) we judge it to be our duty to take the care of Gods worship, and we are so perswaded by divines : That it is the first work we should be about to prefer Gods concerns before our own, if we miscarry in it, the danger will be to our selves, for we own Christ to be above us, and expect to give an account to him for what we do in divine things, as well as civil, and therefore must adventure our account for the one as well as the other.

*Ans.* The first, i. e. Government in civil concernments, is clearly committed to the Magistrates, and therefore may be lawfully and comfortably undertaken, with an expectation of standing in the day of tryal, i. e. of those that have been conscientious and faithful to God in the discharge of that trust, but as for divine concernments that is altogether intruded into, and therefore an account must be given for the very act of undertaking and entering into, or assuming of that power, that is not entrusted with any Magistrate on earth, and is therefore as clearly an act of treason (against the King of Kings) to enter upon and take his kingdom from him, as it is for a subject (though in pretence of love) without any rule or reason, to endeavor to take the Kingdome and Governement from his prince, therefore let Magistrates learn to content themselves with what God hath given them, and let the Lord alone with what he hath reserved to himself.



**Obj.** The Apostle saith, That Magistrates are for the praise of them that do well, &c.

**Ans.** Its true they should be so, i. e. that walk civilly, and orderly in subjection to the Laws of that power, under which they live, in civil respects; the Apostle intends not divine things, for the Magistrates were then heathens, but as to things relating to this life, I do not think that there was ever a Magistracy yet in the world, no not among the heathen, but it had so much of the authority of God stampe upon it, that it was in it self for the praise of them that did well, i. e. Those that walked righteously and in offensively on a civil account. However all men, i. e. Magistrates have failed that have meddled with things divine, making that one part of their work, and particular acts of unrighteousness on the outward account might and may be committed (and doubtless was) either through ignorance or unrighteousness in the Law-makers, or such as did erect them; but I do not judge that ever there hath been any Magisterial authority in the world, but hath countenanced civil righteousness amongst men; and discountenanced unrighteousness, and so it hath been for the praise of them that do well.

**Q.** If the case be thus, What then is the Magistrates duty in Religious matters? hath he nothing at all to do in it?

**A.** As a Magistrate doubtless he hath not, in any way of restraining from, or of compelling to any Religion, it being the Lords work; and without the birth from above, there can be no entrance into the Kingdom. As a Christian, he ought to walk according to the rule of Truth him self, according to his light and faith, and to protect and defend all in the peaceable profession of what they believe to be the truth of God: Commending and preferring the holy Scriptures, encouraging all to a coniciencious searching offer, and living according to, the will of the Lord therein revealed.

But as for such principles and actions, as are cleerly sinful, and not any matter of conscience; be it contrary to the first or second Table, as sweering, cursing, and tumultuous



tuous disobedience, or what-ever cleerly flows from corrupt and degenerated Nature, and is contrary to the Law of Nature itself; I judge is the Magistrates duty to take cognizance of: For the original of Magisterial power was to correct the exorbitancie of mankind in the fall; that so they might live peaceable together; for had not man fallen, there had been no need of Magistracy, but man being fallen, Magistracie was ordained of God, for the punishment of the evil doers in this estate; and there was no other end, nor is there any other work for Magistrates; though God did for a time commit a power to the typical Magistracy of the Jews, which lead to Christ, and is (as hath already been said) natively devolved into Christ, and all things of the celestial and soul-concernment, is in his hand; so that the work and duty of Magistrates, as Magistrates, I shall present in these Scriptures, *Pla. 82. 3, 4. Defend the poor, and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy; deliver the poor and needy, rid them out of the hand of the wicked; Rom. 13. 3, 4. 1 Pst. 2. 13, 14.*

Q. Is it not the Magistrates duty to punish Blasphemy?

A. I suppose it is, being rightly understood what Blasphemy is, nor what men call or suggest to be Blasphemy: Blasphemy being evill; or wicked speaking, or cursing either of God or man. And this I do judge, that the Magistrate ought to make provision against, it being no matter of conscience, but palpable wickedness, to speak evill of, or curse either God or men; though I do not think it should be punished with death, as in the Old Testament, (i.e.) Blasphemy against God, that Church and State being typical, and the censures are to be exercised by Christ in the Church here, cutting off from the Church, and will be eternally judged by Christ hereafter, if repentance prevent not.

And further, it seems to be that which is sealed as a Law in Nature, and that in the Heathen in this case, to preserve the honor of their gods, much more of a professing Christian Magistrate, *Acts 19. 37.* which cannot be, if this of  
Blas-

Blasphemy be permitted; it's evident that there was no Law among the Heathen to compell to the Worship of their Gods, and forbid the preaching of another way; for in as much as they had not been Robbers of Churches, (i. e.) taken out of their consecrated places, nor blasphemed their Godness, there was nought against them; so that in a word, (to conclude) it behoves Magistrates to have respect unto this, onely let them be heedfull what they call Blasphemy, lest they themselves should blaspheme; for persons to have a differing apprehension in matters divine, although it may bee of things that are of highell concernment, believing it to be the truth of God, though probably they may be mistaken in their understanding, is not Blasphemy, but that which may and ought to be lew to the Lord and the Church; *For to his own Master hee standeth or falleth.* This testimony for the Lord I leave with you, as a word that may be of use unto you (if embraced) for almost all Magistrates have assumed Christs Throne, and the People have been willing to have it so; insomuch that the generality of people in the world, have knowne no other Lord nor Law-giver, but the Magistrate even in divine things. And this I judge to be one part of the Lords work at this day, to untwist this knot, i. e. unity of Church and State, and to let the oppressed go free. Amen.

**FINIS.**